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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## *The Papal Assassination Plot (Cont'd.)*

There seems little to be gained from continuing to pick nits, in my reply to Michael Dobbs' reply ["The Pope and the Bulgarians," op-ed, Aug. 10] to my column ["The Attack on the Pope: There's More to the Story," op-ed, Aug. 7] on the papal assassination plot.

My purpose in my New York Times story June 10 was solely to present a summary of the judicial evidence cited by Prosecutor Albano, whose full report was in my possession, on the strength of which he asked for the indictment and trial of the three Bulgarians. I used information that the prosecutor considered important to his argument.

The prosecutor did not attach the importance that the press subsequently did to certain retractions made by the Turkish gunman Mehmet Ali Agca. Reports have implied that I withheld those sections of the report because they did not fit my own thesis. The fact is that I gave the relevant pages to the Italian weekly L'Espresso

when they told me they could not get the full story any place else. My story in The Times was never meant either to evaluate the prosecutor's case or to present whatever evidence might be found to contradict it. That whole area remains a subject for continuing exploration.

However, in regard to Mr. Agca's credibility, readers ought to know exactly what State Prosecutor Albano did have to say about it. Here, in a literal translation, is the pertinent part of Mr. Albano's text (pages 13-15) not published anywhere in full before to my knowledge:

"There is no doubt Agca did not help himself and his position by inserting untrue facts and circumstances into the proceedings. But it is nevertheless necessary to be cautious in deducing, from that alone, the vertical collapse of his credibility.

"Agca certainly committed errors of behavior, but were they really inexplicable and inexcusable? Do we really want to accuse Agca of being simply a

vulgar liar because he did not immediately tell the truth? [Albano's italics.]

"Certainly, his initial approach to the truth was stingy and cautious; but such prudence was reasonably related to personal fears and the difficult game he was playing. We must be firm in making it clear that Agca tried to bargain for his possible liberty with three interlocutors: his Turkish accomplices, his Bulgarian accomplices and Italian justice.

"And he did it exactly like the Levantine he is, with intricate ways of presenting his goods, varying the price, color and weight.

"Metaphor aside, Agca tried from his earliest parsimonious confession to solicit first the help promised by his co-nationals, then the help contracted for with the Bulgarians, and finally entrusted himself to the clemency of our judicial order.

"But is the truth less true solely because it is given in an anomalous way? Does not the truth remain true if, in spite of everything, it is shown to be such with the certitude of evidence and the force of logic?

"Well then, Agca can be believed, can be considered credible and truthful because his truth has been corroborated by personal confirmation from numerous witnesses and—most important—from his co-defendants.

"Every declaration of Agca's, every circumstance he mentioned, every detail, has been subjected to verification, control, investigation. The global results lead to a serene and balanced judgment: Agca is convincing in his reconstruction of the crime.

"Here, we must underline the fact that Mehmet Ali has always remained coherent and firm in the substance of his accusations against Oral Celik, Bekir Celenk, Zhelio Vasilev, Todor Aivazov, and Sergei Antonov. Their roles and their behavior closely connected to the plot, have never been modified or altered [Albano's italics]. Certainly, there have been changes, discordances, contradictions in Agca's declarations. But they have always involved side issues, details of behavior, superfluous indications of times and places, never in any case affecting the relevant [Albano's italics] juridical and penal aspects of the case."

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